



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0345AL-1 for Coosa County School System

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: The applicant has provided a plan that describes the goals for the project including preparing administrators and teachers for implementing rigorous standard changes, preparing students to understand the importance of standards based instruction and supporting parents in developing an understanding of being an active voice in their child's academic career. The goals appear to be not be well thought out or fully comprehensive.		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	3
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: a. The applicant did not provide a description of the process they used to select the schools to participate. b. The applicant provided a list of all the schools that will participate in the grant activities c. The applicant provided a total number of participating students, but not students from low income families or who are high need students.		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: The applicant did provide a high quality plan that describes how the reform plan will be scaled up, including providing additional instructional support and focusing on leadership development. The plan includes instituting a data management system to ensure academic core content performance data to drive the instructional design.		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	4
(A)(4) Reviewer Comments: a. The applicant provides performance on summative assessments for students in the schools. b. The applicant provides assessment data for black students, however, does not demonstrate decreasing achievement gaps for these schools. c. The applicant provides graduation rate data for black students, students in poverty and special education data. It is unclear why the applicant has only chosen to report on black students in the select schools. d. The applicant does not provide college enrollment data for the schools in the proposal. e. The applicant does does not provide postsecondary degree attainment for students/schools in the proposal.		

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	5
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		

- a. The applicant has demonstrated that there has been increased student learning outcomes as measured by math and reading proficiency rates. The applicant did not include high school graduation and college enrollment data.
- b. The applicant did not specifically indicate whether or not reforms have been made in their persistently lowest achieving schools.
- c. The applicant did not indicate if student performance data is available to students, educators and parents.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	0
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- a. The applicant did not demonstrate that actual personnel salaries are available.
- b. The applicant did not demonstrate that actual personnel salaries at the school level were available.
- c. The applicant did not demonstrate the salaries at the school level exist for teachers only.
- d. The applicant did not demonstrate the actual non personnel expenditures at the school level.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	0
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not demonstrate that they have sufficient autonomy under the State's legal, statutory and regulatory requirements to implement the project.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	5
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- a. The applicant did indicate that stakeholders were sought to provide input during the planning state of the proposal.
- a1. The applicant did not provide any evidence of whether or not they have a collective bargaining representation or what the level of engagement of teachers will be for the project.
- b. The applicant did provide letters of support from various stakeholders in support of this project.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has not fully explained the logic behind the reform proposal. The applicant has identified the need to increase technology training among staff and students.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	4

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- a1. The applicant did not provide evidence that students will understand that what they are learning is critical for success.
- aii. The applicant has adequately identified that students will be exposed to the common core of academic standards in an effort to expose them to expectations they will encounter in college and the workforce.
- aiii. The applicant has not provided any evidence that students will be presented with materials of academic interest.
- aiv. The applicant did not provide evidence that students will be exposed to diverse cultures or experiences.

av. The applicant did not demonstrate that students will be taught critical learning skills.

Bi. The applicant has adequately demonstrated that school counselors will work with students in the 8th grade to develop a five year individualized instruction plan for completion of course work toward high school graduation. The individual plan will be regularly evaluated and ameliorated depending on need.

bii- The applicant has adequately provided evidence that students will be exposed to various learning experiences that include cooperative learning, small group instruction, and project based experiences.

biii. The applicant provided no evidence of this criterion.

biv. a. The applicant has provided an adequate timeline for review and revision of student individual plans that will provide parents and students sufficient feedback to ensure student academic success.

biv b. The applicant has provided sufficient evidence that students will be offered personalized learning recommendations from their counselors in the form of letters, school presentations, and the school website.

bv. The applicant provided no evidence of this criterion.

c. No evidence of this criterion was provided.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	2
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

a1. No evidence of this criterion has been offered.

aii. No evidence of this criterion has been offered.

aiii. The applicant has adequately provided evidence that teachers will be engaged in weekly meetings to assess the needs of students and make changes accordingly.

b1. No evidence of this criterion has been offered.

bii. No evidence of this criterion has been offered/

biii. The applicant has adequately provided evidence that at risk students will be identified during teacher data meetings in order to provide students with lab support for credit recovery opportunities.

ci. No evidence of this criterion has been offered.

cii. No evidence of this criterion has been offered.

d. The applicant has provided evidence that more highly qualified teachers will be placed in high need schools.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	3
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
a. The applicant has not demonstrated the organization of the LEA central office or the consortiums governance structure.		
b. The applicant has not demonstrate which members of the school community serve on the school leadership teams. The applicant has indicated that individual LEAS have the autonomy to create and design the school calendar.		
c. The applicant has not demonstrated how students will be given the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on mastery not seat time.		

- d. The applicant has not demonstrated how students will be given the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times/ways.
- e. The applicant has not demonstrated how they will provide learning resources that are adaptable to all students.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)

10

4

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- a. The applicant has demonstrated that they will allow students to take computer devices home to provide access after school hours.
- b. The applicant has indicated that a full time computer technician will be hired to provide technical assistance, it is unclear how this technician will service all of the identified schools.
- c. The applicant has not demonstrated how they will use information technology to allow parents/students to export their information in an open data format
- d. The applicant has adequately indicated that the consortium currently uses an interoperable data system in all of their respective districts.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	5
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: The applicant has indicated a plan to have year round monitoring system of the project. However, the monitoring plan does not indicate how regular feedback will be offered and how it will lead to continuous improvements of the project plan.		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: The applicant has demonstrated that they will communicate with stakeholders through emails, school newsletters, parent meetings, and school committees. It is unclear how these modalities will allow for feedback that will result in plan improvement.		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments: a. The applicant has not offered a rationale for why the performance measure was chosen b. The applicant has not demonstrated how the measures will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern c. The applicant has not demonstrated how it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments: The applicant has indicated that professional development effectiveness will be measured by changes in teacher beliefs/satisfaction and also through student achievement. The plan is not thorough in that it does not indicate how they will measure student success or teacher beliefs/satisfaction.		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score

(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: a. The applicant does identify all funds that will be used in support of the project. b. The budget is sufficient to support the development of the applicant's proposal c. The applicant does not provide a budget that clearly provides a thoughtful rationale for invests.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: The applicant doesn't demonstrate a plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant has expired.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	1
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: 1. The applicant did not provide evidence of a sustainable partnership. 2. The applicant did not provide evidence of the desired results for students. 4. The applicant indicated that they would partner with local colleges to allow students the opportunity visit college campuses. This partnership doesn't address how the social emotional needs of the students will be met. 5. The applicant did not address this section. 6. The applicant did not identify an ambitious yet achievable performance measure.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: The applicant has not sufficiently provided evidence that demonstrates that they will create learning environments that are designed to improve teaching and learning through individual learning for students. It is very unclear what the vision of the project is, and the student outcomes are not clearly defined. The applicant has not provided specific ways in which RTTD funds will be used to reinforce a culture where students are college ready and where teachers and receiving Hugh quality professional development to lead students. Further it is in unclear if there is sufficient stakeholder support for this proposal.		

Total	210	69
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	0
Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments: There was no optional budget submitted.		



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0345AL-2 for Coosa County School System

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application presents a comprehensive and coherent vision that is based on previous successful school transformations within two of the three consortia Districts, Coosa and Marengo, and that relies almost exclusively on Project "Caring About Results Everyday" (CARE). The narrative and detailed explanation of how CARE would be scaled within the three consortia Districts through this grant provide evidence that are directly aligned with two of the core educational reform areas: adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and in turning around lowest-achieving schools. The plan describes an embedded emphasis on the use of data systems, consistent with a third core educational reform area, but does not elaborate on the type of data systems currently in place or proposed to be implemented as part of this project. The narrative provides a rich sense of the timeframes anticipated for implementation, roles and responsibilities, and a thoughtful framework to sustain the project beyond the term of the grant by investing heavily in the professional development training of participating educators. This final aspect aligns well with the fourth core educational reform area of recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals. The approach designed for this project is properly contextualized with an overall emphasis on student achievement and not upon the deployment of funds for positions and technology alone. With such a reliance upon CARE, however, the narrative lacks sufficient detail that might further credential the Education Management Organization and the claim of its proven record of success. However, the application does include additional detail in the appendix that illuminates many of the excellent strategies that CARE utilizes, particularly MAGIC -- Making Achievement Gains in the Classroom. CARE utilizes a rich variety of technology in its approach which support accelerated student achievement and personalized student support. It is stated that the schools within Coosa and Marengo that implemented the CARE program all improved academically and met Adequate Yearly Progress without providing the correlating data. With that said, the layered approach of qualified consultants throughout the plan is impressive and indicative of accelerating and deepening student learning.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The application offers a weak and limited description of the process used to determine the schools to participate. The narrative indicates that all of the schools within two of the three consortia LEAs, Coosa and Marengo, elected to involve all of their schools in the project while Autauga decided to include only two of its schools. A rationale for the process for this decision is not provided. The narrative states that all schools meet the eligibility requirements but does not provide evidence.</p> <p>(b) The application provides a list of participating schools as required by the criterion as well as enrollment totals for each school.</p> <p>(c) The application indicates that approximately 3,372 students will participate in the project and provides the required information identifying the number of participating low-income students, high-need students, and the number of participating educators.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application states a commitment to rely on building the capacity of the staff within each consortia LEA to sustain scalability across the entire Districts. The plan presents a credible and coherent approach to translate reform generated by the proposal</p>		

into meaningful results linked to the consortia's outcome goals. The narrative presents specific and detailed strategies, including precise action steps for each, around five key areas: academic content, leadership development, technology tools and infrastructure, parental involvement and cultural redesign, and monitoring. The thoughtful integration of the five areas is fully explained and meets the standard for a high-quality plan.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)

10

7

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The application provides a detailed profile of growth targets for summative assessments for each relevant grade in math and reading and indicates ambitious yet achievable annual goals consistently overall and for each subgroup as required by the criterion.

(b) The achievement gap is properly addressed in the application with ambitious yet achievable growth targets that will significantly eliminate the gap by the end of the grant period. Data are presented for each subgroup as required by the criterion.

(c) The data presented for improved graduation rate is ambitious yet achievable, particularly for the Coosa County schools where the high school graduation rate is presently at 57% and the goal is to achieve a 100% graduation rate by the end of the grant. This compares to Autauga County which has a present graduation rate of 85% and Marengo County which has a current graduation rate of 87%. All three consortia schools have established goals for 100% graduation rates by the end of the grant period.

(d) College enrollment data is not currently maintained and is not included in the application.

(e) The application does not address this optional element of the criterion.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	5
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The application fails to present evidence indicating success for each consortia LEA consistent with the elements required in the criterion. A non-related description of a process for the LEAs to examine data and utilize results to inform instruction is included in the narrative but this does not support the requirements in the criterion.</p> <p>(b) The application provides evidence of dramatic improvement in improved student learning outcomes and closing the achievement gap over the past four years with specific success in two persistently low-performing schools with one each in Coosa and Marengo. Both made great strides following district interventions by the CARE program resulting in both schools achieving AYP and increased graduation rates. No discussion is provided for performance in Autauga.</p> <p>(c) The application does not address this element of the criterion.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While the application provides a detailed and credible description of the financial requirements by the State for each District that indicate compliance with each of the four elements required in this criterion, it does not demonstrate any specific evidence to support the narrative by offering details specific to each element.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	1
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Unfortunately, the application presents a large amount of detail in describing the State's current reform plan, Alabama 2020, followed by substantial profiles of the High School Testing Model, Middle School Testing Program, and the Elementary School Testing Program, none of which addressed the requirements of this criterion to demonstrate sufficient flexibility and autonomy in State, legal, and statutory regulatory requirements to implement personalized learning environments. The narrative gives a brief description of a statewide school reform model, First Choice, which indicates flexibility for schools away from the</p>		

traditional Carnegie unit but no further examples of flexibility or autonomy are provided.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	2
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The application presents a weak description of the process utilized to obtain meaningful stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal. The narrative mentions contacting a wide array of stakeholders including teachers, community leaders, local businesses, civic and community-based organizations, social services, colleges, churches, parent-teacher groups, all parents and staff members. But the plan offers no evidence of exactly who or how many members of each stakeholder group actually participated in the shaping of the proposal nor does it describe how frequently contact was established with these groups. No definition is given to the kinds of feedback that was provided from the stakeholders to influence the preparation of the proposal. No evidence is included of direct engagement and support for the proposals from teachers in participating schools beyond the signature from the president of the local teacher's union for each consortia LEA.</p> <p>(b) The letters of support provided primarily address the Billingsley School in the Autauga County LEA with only two letters of support for Coosa County. The letters indicate general support of the application but do not demonstrate a depth of knowledge about the details of the plan. None of the other consortia LEAs included letters of support.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	1
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application fails to present a high-quality plan for an analysis of the applicant's current status in implementing personalized learning environments. Instead, the narrative describes the need to provide technology tools, ongoing professional development and how technology training might be provided. The plan briefly suggest that an analysis of achievement gaps and a plan to address these gaps was undertaken without any details concerning what the analysis consisted of, the grades involved, which members of the consortia were involved or specifically how this information will be used to develop individualized learning plans.</p>		

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	8
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a)(i) The plan states that all participating students will be engaged in educator-level meetings, including parents, to design a personalized learning plan for each student. This approach will be based on an examination of student data combined with student and parent input to develop a customized learning style personalized plan. These meetings are, in part, designed to emphasize to students that what they are learnign is important to their success.</p> <p>(a)(ii) The plan lacks a particularly visionary approach for pursuing learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards as required by the criterion. The narrative describes inviting parents and students to presentations that explain the process for college pre exams, gaining admission, financial aid and enrolling in college classes as evidence without elaborating on how these steps are aligned with the Common Core Standards indicated as the preparation guidelines for college and the workforce for the participating LEAs.</p> <p>(a)(iii) The application does not provide any evidence of how students will be specifically involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest.</p> <p>(a)(iv) The application is completely silent on any student access or exposure to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives.</p> <p>(a)(v) The plan does not provide any evidence consistent with the requirements of this criterion.</p> <p>(b)(i) The plan describes a strategy for 8th grade students to develop a five year plan for completion of course work that will ensure on-time graduation but does not elaborate coherently to address all of the elements required by the criterion.</p> <p>(b)(ii) The plan does not provide evidence of a variety of high-quality instructional approaches or environments.</p> <p>(b)(iii) High-quality content, including digital learning content, is not addressed in the plan.</p> <p>(b)(iv) The narrative states that once personalized plans are in place that the plan will be "regularly evaluated and changed based on student needs" and that feedback to students and parents will be ongoing. But the plan does not elaborate to</p>		

include how frequently the plan will be evaluated or what strategies might be used to modify the plan consistent with college- and career-ready standards. No feedback loop for implementing personalized learning recommendations based on the student's current knowledge and skills, available content, instructional approaches and supports.

(b)(v) High need students are not addressed in the application.

(c) Beyond brief references in the narrative of teacher and counselor support for students no specific evidence that any mechanisms are in place to provide training and support to students that will ensure they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them. The plan is also weak in describing what tools might be provided to students.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

17

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a)(i) The plan is focused on having a highly effective teacher for every student and a highly effective principal for every school. To accomplish this in part, the plan describes a training schedule that includes planning individualized instruction and fully implementing a personalized learning and teaching environment for all students which is consistent with what is required by this criterion. Further, all participants in the plan will be given technology tools and a robust infrastructure to support the use of these tools. To ensure that this technology is used to establish personalized learning environments, an instructional technology specialist is to be hired for each school as part of the grant request.

(a)(ii) The training schedule for teachers and administrators also focuses on utilizing constructive feedback to change instruction and how to implement a variety of instructional strategies which will contribute to opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks best suited to their optimal learning approaches.

(a)(iii) The plan includes grade level, bi-weekly meetings of teachers to share strategies and frequently monitor progress toward meeting standards. This group will also analyze data to inform instruction plans for both acceleration and remediation which meets the criterion for improving the individual and collective practice of educators.

(a)(iv) The application fails to address a plan for improving teachers' and principals' practice and effectiveness by using feedback provided by the LEAs teacher and principal evaluation systems.

(b)(i) The bi-weekly group teacher meetings provide a meaningful process to produce actionable information to help educators identify optimal learning approaches that respond to individual student academic needs and interests. The enhanced use of technology, digital content, and on-line learning also support the creation of individualized, optimal learning for participating students.

(b)(ii) The plan does envision the deployment of a wide variety of high-quality learning resources through the implementation of E2020 labs where students can take remedial as well as advanced classes, digital content and online courses. Students will work at their own pace to achieve mastery in the E2020 labs which provides a high-quality learning resource.

(b)(iii) Processes and tools to match student needs with specific resources are not defined in the application.

(c)(i) The application describes EDUCATEAlabama Collaborative Teacher Evaluation System as the formative teacher evaluation instrument used by school leaders to examine data to determine what type of professional development has the most impact on improved student outcomes. The evaluation is also used to determine where the teacher fits among four levels of practice then to develop a professional learning plan that will assist the teacher in achieving the professional learning needed to progress to higher levels of teacher practice.

(c)(ii) The plan describes a robust training schedule and ongoing practices to continuously improve school progress toward the goals of increasing student performance. However, the plan does not link any of these strategies to a focus on closing the achievement gap.

(d) An overall goal of the plan with regard to teaching and leading is that every student has a highly effective teacher and every school is led by a highly effective principal. To improve teaching and leading in the participating schools, a detailed schedule and plan has been developed to provide all teachers and administrators training, resources and time to work collaboratively. The narrative cites the Governor's Commission on Quality Teaching as having identified areas of teacher shortages in STEM resulting in the state's design of the Alabama Teacher Recruitment Incentive Program (ATRIP) which offers scholarships to aspiring teachers and has led to more highly qualified teachers being available in the State. More significantly, the State has passed a comprehensive law that eliminates tenure, allows for removing ineffective tenured

teachers and provides opportunities for teachers to improve practices. Further, the plan articulates a commitment to leverage resources from the district, state personnel, regional in-service centers and university partnerships to build capacity for teaching and learning all of which supports a high-quality plan for increasing the number of effective and highly effective teachers and principals.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	2
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The application asserts that "all members of the consortium have organized local staff to provide support to all participating schools" but fails to describe specifically how the LEAs are organized at the central office to support the plan or what the detailed consortium governance structure for providing support and services actually would look like. The narrative describes a District School Improvement Specialist who will serve as a liaison between the school and central office but it is not clear if each participating school will have this support function, and, if so, how they might collaborate together and to whom they would specifically report to in the central office. The plan does not elaborate sufficiently in these areas to meet the requirements of this criterion.</p> <p>(b) While some flexibility is articulated with regard to setting daily student schedules and limited autonomy to define roles and responsibilities at the school level, the plan does not specify the extent of the flexibility and autonomy that is in place as required by the criterion.</p> <p>(c) Insufficient vision, coherence and thought is evidenced in the plan for specifically how students will have the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery. The narrative states that "students will be provided opportunities" consistent with the requirements of this criterion but then fails to describe what the online technologies would consist of, if they are to be offered to all grade levels, what differentiation with regard to tools will be in place based on appropriate grade-level approaches, or how all of this will work together. Further, no evidence is provided to indicate any of these opportunities are presently in place.</p> <p>(d) The narrative states that teachers will work collaboratively to develop multiple assessments and assignments for students and that these work products will be shared across grade levels and schools. It also indicates that schools will have the flexibility to allow students to demonstrate mastery not by the amount of time spent on the standard but on the true mastery of content but then fails to elaborate on exactly how this will be achieved or to provide evidence of any of these practices that might be currently in place.</p> <p>(e) The plan is silent on providing any resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The narrative presents a brief plan in the form of a few sentences indicating that technological infrastructure will be put in place as a result of this grant to provide a one-to-one deployment of devices for teachers and students. This decision was based upon an infrastructure evaluation prior to the grant application in which a number of recommendations were made. The plan fails to delineate what these recommendations were or what necessary changes as referenced in the narrative will be made if the grant is awarded. Based on what is presented, sufficient evidence of a high-quality plan that meets the elements of this criterion is not realized.</p> <p>(b) The plan indicates that technical support will be provided at each school through a newly-hired full-time employee which is supported from funds in the plan's budget. The schools will work with students to provide peer support as well and the plan calls for an academic coach in each school to work with teachers in a one-on-one basis to provide support for using technical tools for learning. The plan does not address support for stakeholders, lacks vision and fails to make a compelling case for ensuring that a range of strategies would be provided.</p> <p>(c) The plan offers no details with regard to how information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format would be implemented or any reference as to how the use of data in other electronic learning systems might be integrated as required by the criterion.</p> <p>(d) The plan states that each district in the consortium currently uses an interoperable data system and indicates that the</p>		

district will utilize the system to store and communicate human resources data, student information data, budget data and instructional improvement data, as required by the criterion.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	2
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan lacks any evidence of vision or deep thought with regard to strategy for implementing a continuous improvement process and what is thinly described in the narrative does not rise to the level of rigorous. For instance, in the monitoring schedule described, stating that data meetings will take place at the school level on a weekly basis fails to illuminate the data metrics that will be discussed and followed, how this information would be publicly shared, or any reference at all as to how the quality of the consortium's investments funded by Race to the Top - District are to be measured.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	0
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative emphasizes the importance of ongoing communication with stakeholders and presents a variety of processes envisioned to generate discussion among parents, teachers, and other stakeholders for orientations, conferences, open house and tours of school facilities without ever describing what the criterion requires which is evidence of a clear, high-quality approach to continuously improve its plan.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The application lists five performance measures and offers no rationale for selecting them beyond stating that they are "research based measures for progress in being on track to graduate" which does not meet the standard of a high-quality plan.</p> <p>(b) The plan does not address the requirements of this criterion as it fails to offer any description for how the measures will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its plan.</p> <p>(c) The application does not provide a set of between 12-14 measures as recommended nor does the plan present the five measures with any of the required performance goals. The narrative describes the process anticipated to assess each measure in general terms but lack sufficient specificity to allow an evaluation of how the measures will be reviewed and improved over time. The plan includes the required breakdown of participating students that have an effective or highly effective teacher and principal of record. But this data is not available by sub-group as required by the criterion. The plan offers no compliance with required or applicant-provided performance measures.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application fails to present a high-quality plan to evaluate the effectiveness of Race to the Top - District funded activities by not providing a thoughtful, comprehensive rationale for the six measures listed. The plan lacks rigor and a sufficient degree of explanation for how these measures would be assessed to more productively use time, staff, money or other resources to improve results.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The budget identifies all funds that will support the project. All funds required will be derived from Race to the Top -</p>		

District grants and no funds outside of this are contemplated.

(b) The budget is reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the consortium's proposal. Each LEA has submitted a distinct budget that is tailored to the various differentiated circumstances for their participating schools and the largest line item in each budget is identified to pay for contracted services through CARE. All budgets for each LEA are reasonable and sufficient.

(c)(i) The budget narrative included with each LEA request describes all of the funds that the applicants will use to support implementation of the proposal and includes a thoughtful rationale for the intended investments and priorities.

(c)(ii) The budget narrative identifies funds that will be used for one-time investments specifically with regard to infrastructure and equipment for each LEA.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application does not provide evidence of any plan for sustaining the project's goals after the term of the grant.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	2

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The application fails to meet the Competitive Preference Priority in that the application only addresses one aspect which is a description of existing partnerships with the departments of social services and human resources, local colleges and churches. While these partnerships are well presented and reflect the limited opportunity for partnerships in rural communities, the array of partnerships and their resulting services for students is comprehensive. The application does not meet the balance of the elements required in this criterion.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Overall, this application presents a coherent, reasonable and comprehensive plan that in a number of aspects rises to the level of high-quality but this is diminished due to several key gaps in the narrative that are required elements in the criterion. The vision and focus demonstrated by the three members of the consortium to base a transformative impact for participating students through the scaled use of a proven school reform process, CARE, is credible and exhibits a high likelihood of success. The plan is uneven in consistently explaining personalized learning strategies, tools and supports that will result in the anticipated performance goals. And the plan is very weak in aligning strategies with college- and career- ready standards and in identifying ambitious yet achievable performance measures. The plan offers meaningful glimpses into the use of technology to accelerate student achievement, deepen student learning, decreasing the achievement gap, and increasing the effectiveness of teachers as required by the Absolute Priority 1.

Total	210	93
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0345AL-3 for Coosa County School System

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium of districts submitting this grant proposal has laid out a vision of reform that includes lofty goals for the faculty, administrators, students and parents in their districts.</p> <p>The reform vision in the proposal includes job embedded professional learning for administrators and teachers to improve their use of data to inform instruction while implementing common core standards and providing differentiated and individualized instruction, preparing students to work collaboratively and take responsibility for their own learning of the common core standards, and assisting parents in understanding their child's progress and advocating for their child. The proposal provides for expansion of the use of technology both to improve assessment and feedback, and to increase access to curriculum.</p> <p>The four core assurance areas are addressed in the proposal, although identifying the lowest achieving schools is not clearly addressed with data, but referred to through a needs analysis.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium of three districts described a process including meetings and conducting a needs assessment in order to select participating schools, but the leap from the discussion of the process to the selection of schools left an ambiguous gap as to how the school sites were selected based on the needs analysis. Two of the districts included all of their schools, while one district only included two school sites, although it was not explained how many schools are in the district and why all schools were not included.</p> <p>The consortium provided all of the required data on the demographics of the schools' students.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium has included the elements of a high-quality plan in their proposal, incorporating their goals into their explanations as strategies, their activities as action steps, which include references to timelines in many cases, deliverables, and persons responsible, although the expansion of implementing the model at the non-participating schools in the future is not clearly laid out.</p> <p>The plan included strategies for Academic Content, Leadership Development, Technology Tools and Infrastructure and Monitoring.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Summative assessment was included by grade level for math and reading for each of the participating schools (although grade 11 data was omitted for Coosa County).</p> <p>The data provided regarding decreasing achievement gaps was confusing due to the fact that it was based on a proficiency</p>		

index which was not defined or explained in the proposal. The proficiency index was for elementary and middle school grade spans (no high school data was included in this section). The figures given were ambiguous without any further information, however, if the figures represented percentages of students achieving proficiency, the goals were certainly ambitious, with most subgroups aiming for 100% proficiency, with some lower figures included, especially for the special education subgroup. The proficiency index was also combined by district per grade span, so information per school was not identified. This would not have affected the data for Coosa County as they have only one school per grade span.

Further information about closing achievement gaps is available in the proficiency rates and growth expectations on the summative assessments. While most of the growth targets for these grade level/content specific (math/reading) assessments are ambitious, aiming for 100% proficiency rates, one area that is clearly lacking ambitious growth expectations is the special education subgroup. Across all three districts' data, the special education scores are markedly lower and the expectations do not grow at a rate to show a closing of the achievement gap. In fact, in some cases the expectations drop from current performance levels (i.e., Autaugaville School, Grade 8, math). In several cases the achievement gap between the special education subgroup performance and the overall performance is not closed at all over the range of annual growth targets.

Expectations for graduation rates for the special education subgroup also lack ambitious growth expectations. No explanation was given for these expectations across the grant for this subgroup.

College enrollment data was omitted in the proposal.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	10
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>As evidence of the record of success for the districts in the consortium, two schools, one each in two separate districts, were listed as being persistently low achieving by the Alabama State Department of Education. One of these schools also entered into school improvement status. Data was provided in the proposal outlining this school's progress in addressing the proficiency rates for all students, and specifically for the subgroup of black students. This data was provided in the form of a proficiency index, which is not explained or defined within the proposal. The proficiency index has improved for this school site, with credit being cited for this district implementing the same reform model as is being proposed in this application. No explanation is given for why this school continues to need this school improvement model implemented if the faculty and administrator(s) at the site have already worked through this process. To document their record of success, the proposal noted that these two schools are now achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and that graduation rates have increased.</p> <p>References were made to the use of student performance data by educators and administrators in turning around the school performance, but no references were made directly regarding the improvement of the current low performing schools or about the availability and use of data with parents.</p> <p>The LEAs in the consortium have laid out a plan for the ongoing use of data in the school improvement process. This plan outlines timelines and responsible parties in each district to ensure that the action steps are implemented. One highlight of the timeline is the development of a 45 day action plan based on the data analysis, to be implemented for each quarter of the school year.</p> <p>The point score awarded was in the medium range. This represented the balance of the track record presented of the districts' turn around of two low performing schools as well as the process outlined for school improvement based on data analysis with the lack of detail regarding closing the achievement gaps among students in the subgroups.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative explained the requirements in the state of Alabama for transparency of financial records through the e-GAP accounting system. The proposal stated that the specific information required in subcriteria sections B2, a-d, is available to stakeholders through local district websites, as well as through the Alabama State Department of Education website, as well as in district offices.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The LEAs have provided clear and detailed information regarding the framework for statewide education, Alabama Plan 2020. This state plan outlines the state's approach to connecting adult activities to student outcomes and is related to implementing college and career ready standards and defining the system for assessment and accountability.

The application states that districts in Alabama have the autonomy to implement school calendars and schedules tailored to the needs of their community, which supports their ability to implement personalized learning environments. This autonomy will allow the LEAs to vary time spent on content based on students' needs rather than seat time in classrooms.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)

10

5

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative supports that the leaders in each district of the consortium communicated with board members and stakeholders about the grant opportunity and invited community members to participate in the process of the development of the application. Students were not specifically included. Parents were said to be involved in the process through participation in the planning meetings and responding to surveys.

The narrative discusses involvement and engagement of the teachers and administrators, but no support is documented in the form of letters or signature pages of support or attendance at meetings.

Ten letters of support were included in the appendix. Each was positive, with several discussing the rural environment of the school system, the need for increased technology resources, and the need for improving professional development of teachers. The letters of support were overwhelmingly from the town of Billingsley, specifically addressing their participation in the grant, and including a letter from the mayor of Billingsley. Three remaining letters in support of the grant were included from Coosa County. Lacking from the documentation was support for the other schools/district included in the consortium. The majority of letters were from local business people, a few of which were also graduates and/or parents of students in the school systems currently. Two letters were included from parent organizations.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Aspects of a high quality plan are included addressing the goals of changing classroom environments to encourage personalized learning, increasing technology use for curriculum and assessment, and closing achievement gaps through ongoing data analysis and the use of a data room at each school site. The aspects of timelines and persons responsible for each portion of the plan are vague in the explanations and detail in the proposal. Deliverables are mentioned as they occur in the explanation, including technology training schedules, data room information, communication instruments for parents,

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	17

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Student learning is to be based around common core standards, which are also referred to as "common core of academic standards for grades kindergarten through twelve (K-12)." The aim throughout the proposal is for students to be prepared for college and/or the workforce upon graduation from high school. The personalized learning is expected to take place through teachers' improved use of data and professional development to help them base instructional decisions on student achievement data.

Sources for student data have been extensively outlined in the proposal, with updates coming from the Alabama State Department of Education regarding changing high school testing from a graduation test to end of course assessments and providing an online system for formative assessments to be used in the schools. This system should provide ongoing student data to teachers to use to inform the individualized instruction components.

The proposal includes emphasis on helping the students become more engaged in their own personalized learning plan, as well as encouraging collaborative work and options for credit courses and credit recovery through technological access instead of traditional classes.

Technology will play a key role in the implementation of the proposal, allowing access to digital and online learning resources

for the students and to assessment information for the teachers and principals.

The high quality plan is not summarized in a chart, but the elements of goals, activities, timelines and deliverables are included in the narrative, as well as district personnel to be involved or responsible for various parts of the proposal.

The proposal includes a wide range of goals and activities aimed at increasing student achievement related to career and college ready standards, in addition to learning to work collaboratively and having increased engagement and choice in their learning options.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	14
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>As required in the criteria sections a and b, the consortium proposal includes detailed information about the timelines for training and meeting with the principals and teachers in the districts' participating schools to help them learn how to use the available data to inform their instructional practice, and how to use the data to shape individualized learning paths. The teachers will have access to job embedded professional development through coaching and leadership teams to assist with the data analysis from a range of formative and summative assessments. This ongoing professional development and collaboration will address the implementation of personalized learning for the students and the teachers' use of data in order to guide the individualization of the instruction. Additionally, access to AP and online coursework will be available to further enable students to individualize their learning experiences. This ongoing professional development will help teachers learn to measure student progress and help guide the students through personalized learning environments.</p> <p>One area that is not addressed is how the LEAs will use information from the teacher evaluation systems to help make improvements in the culture and climate of each participating school (as required in c, i).</p> <p>An area that has been omitted from the discussion and the data charts is in relation to part (d) in this section. The proposal does discuss the fact that teacher preparation programs in the state have already been redesigned and that the LEAs are committed to hiring highly qualified teachers; however, no data has been provided regarding the involvement, development, recruitment or retention of effective and/or highly effective teachers and principals (as defined in the grant application). No high quality plan is laid out to improve this section and no description of updating the teacher and principal evaluation models to include the data required under this portion has been included in the narrative or appendices.</p> <p>Balancing these omissions with the descriptions of the professional development improvements described in the proposal led to the score point indicated.</p>		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Under the programs outlined in this proposal, students in the participating schools will have access to digital learning options and mastery learning vs. seat time requirements in courses while working toward mastery of college and career ready standards.</p> <p>The narrative explains that school leadership teams will be in place at each school. The consortium governance structure is outlined in the memorandum of understanding creating the consortium.</p> <p>The students and teachers will all be participating in the process with technological devices designed to increase their participation in the process, and to be able to access learning resources from other places, and at other times, than school.</p> <p>Specific attention has not been provided to discussion of making sure resources and practices are accessible to all students.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative explains that parents and students have access, or will have access, to learning materials via online resources, 24/7/365. Under the grant program students will be provided access to technology to take home with them at some sites, or extended access to technology resources at the school sites.</p>		

Data is available to parents through an online resource, but it is not clarified to the point of whether interoperable data systems exist and have the ability to export the information in an open data format.

An outline of the plan for implementing the technology deployment is included, but it is not specific enough with timelines, deliverables and persons responsible to be considered a high quality plan.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	12
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A schedule broken down to weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly monitoring meetings is outlined in the plan. The plan includes personnel involved at each point. One highlight of the plan is the 45 day action plans that will be written and followed quarterly throughout the school year.</p> <p>The plan includes communication within the consortium through quarterly and annual reports, as well as reports to stakeholders from each LEA.</p> <p>While the timelines are outlined in the plan, the measurement and and possible revision process is not described in detail. It had to be inferred that the timeline meetings reference the ongoing analysis of data to monitor the grant implementation.</p> <p>The proposed timeline for participation in ongoing data analysis for the purpose of school improvement provides a strategy to guide the ongoing process of monitoring and adjusting the grant activities as necessary, though details of analyzing data to make decisions about the progress of the grant and possible monitoring that needs to take place is limited, resulting in the point score awarded.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Member schools have plans in place for stakeholder involvement and meetings with community members during the grant period to provide information and receive feedback. The plans include communication through websites, emails, phone calling systems and newsletters, as well as encouraging feedback from the stakeholders from participation in meetings, involvement in committees, and invitation to provide feedback through surveys.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium has identified its performance measures, but detail of the current status of each, except for #1 and #2, are not included. Also omitted are the growth expectations for each. While data on performance assessments can be found in other areas of the grant, some of these measures would only be addressed in this section, including the FAFSA information and the consortium's choice of including the percentage of discipline referrals at each grade span as their measure of a health or social-emotional indicator.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium has included plans to evaluate the professional development, use of technology, parental and community involvement, scheduling and infrastructure on an ongoing basis throughout the grant period. The plan to collect data and assess each area is included. The process for revising any of these areas based on the evaluation was not clearly addressed.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium has outlined a reasonable budget and method for dividing the requested funds between the districts and participating schools. The consortium includes nine schools in three school districts, and the funds requested will be allocated based on a per pupil rate based on the total funds and the number of participating students across the districts. An explanation was provided for the need for the grant funding to provide the opportunity to level the playing field for the participating students in the LEAs, which are situated in rural environments with a large population of economically disadvantaged families.</p> <p>One time equipment costs are identified. A large amount of the funding is allocated to a contracted service, but this service is a major portion of their grant proposal, so it seems reasonable.</p> <p>The proposal included detailed and thoughtful rationale for items included in the budget.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	3
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Specific detailed information regarding sustaining the project's goals following the grant period were not found in the application. References to decreased funding at the district level was made and the belief is that getting these programs set up will provide the basis for continuation once the technology and effects of the professional development are in place to build capacity at the school, district and consortium level.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	4
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal highlights a variety of partnerships that support the members of the consortium, however no specific information regarding indicators and tracking data are included for measuring the effectiveness of these partnerships.</p> <p>The proposal explains that due to the rural environment where these LEAs are located, some partnerships are challenging to make, especially with businesses, so they depend on partnering with local civic organizations and churches. While the proposal identifies these in a general manner, specific partnerships are not named.</p> <p>The requirements of this section of the application include identifying specific indicators for participating students to measure the benefits of the partnership, both educational and social emotional. The application also requires that the partnership(s) would integrate education and other services for participating children, as well as details about how the partnership benefits would be expanded to other students in the LEAs.</p> <p>The omission of the details addressing the subcriteria in this section led to the score indicated.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium addresses the need and plan to implement change across the participating schools through professional development to build capacity of teachers and principals and to upgrade technology to increase teacher, principal, parent, and</p>		

student access to learning resources, assessments, and data. The growth outlined in this proposal will help teachers learn how to analyze assessment results in order to guide individualized student learning of the college and career ready standards.

While the LEAs address the need to hire highly qualified educators and principals, their proposal could be strengthened by addressing the specific definitions of effective and highly effective teachers and principals throughout the application.

The core educational assurance areas were comprehensively addressed across the proposal.

Total	210	149
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